

AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

MARK D. CHAPMAN

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“In the discussions now going forward about restructuring ministerial education, a book like the present volume has a huge contribution to make, not just to the intellectual and institutional history of the Church of England but to that Church’s self-understanding. As we read this excellent memoir of a history both brave and complex, we can be grateful that the Church of England has been so wonderfully served; and we can strengthen our resolve to make sure that such a service is still available to the Church of the future”

The Most Revd Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Ambassadors of Christ commemorates 150 years of theological education in Cuddesdon College, Oxford. Presenting a detailed history of England’s most famous theological college, *Ambassadors of Christ* also contributes to the wider discussion of theological education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and discusses prospects for the future.

Following a forward by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Mark Chapman discusses the revival of theology and education in the early years of the nineteenth century. An essay on Samuel Wilberforce as a pastoral theologian follows from Alastair Redfern, and a revision by Andrew Atherstone of Owen Chadwick’s Centenary History explores several of the leading figures of the time, including Henry Liddon and Edward King, and brings the focus up to the 1880s. For the first time Ripon Hall, which merged with Cuddesdon in 1975, receives a thorough historical treatment by Michael Brierley. Mark Chapman then discusses the 1960s under Robert Runcie, and Robert Jeffrey examines the theological and churchmanship issues which emerged from the merger and the issues in debate today. Recent developments in theological education throughout the Church of England are explored further, before the appendices presenting Michael Ramsey’s 1958 sermon and Owen Chadwick’s 1966 sermon.

This special commemorative volume will appeal to past and present students as well as specialists in nineteenth and twentieth church history and all those interested in ministerial education and spiritual formation.

“A theological college endeavours, so far as human agency can do this, to give the tongue of the learned, the power of spiritual instruction to the future ambassadors of Christ. . . . It would fain teach them to listen, morning by morning, for the Divine Voice, explaining, deepening, fertilising within them the truth which is thus committed to their guardianship” (Henry P. Liddon *Clerical Life and Work*, pp. 49-50).

Ambassadors of Christ

Commemorating 150 Years of Theological Education
in Cuddesdon 1854-2004

MARK D. CHAPMAN

Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, UK

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The late **Michael Ramsey** was Archbishop of Canterbury.

Alastair Redfern is a former Vice-Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon and is currently Bishop of Grantham in the Diocese of Lincoln.

Preface

For good or ill the village of Cuddesdon has probably made more of an impact on the Church of England than any other in the country. Its life has been dominated by a theological college since 1854 when Samuel Wilberforce decided to build his diocesan seminary across the road from his Palace. The story of its founding was brilliantly told fifty years ago by Owen Chadwick for the centenary of Cuddesdon College.¹ This book commemorates another important milestone, that of the 150th anniversary of theological education in Cuddesdon. It does not aim to be comprehensive – that would make it too much like the ponderous and prosaic *Cuddesdon College 1854-1929: A Record and Memorial* of 1930.² Instead the different essays present snapshots of the history of Cuddesdon College, Ripon Hall and Ripon College Cuddesdon. Each offers some fresh insights into some of the great personalities who have helped shape the ethos of all three institutions over a century and a half.

Most importantly, this collection pays proper attention not just to Cuddesdon College, which many liked to think of as the Sandhurst of the Church of England, but also to Ripon Hall, its perhaps unlikely partner in the merger of 1975 which formed Ripon College Cuddesdon. While location is obviously a crucial part of any theological education and buildings can do much to shape a spiritual outlook, it is absolutely vital that the contribution of Ripon Hall on Boar's Hill, with its academic excellence and its emphasis on unfettered theological exploration, is not lost to the wider church in what often seems like an era of managerialism and shallowness.

The book begins with an introduction which locates Cuddesdon in the history of theological education more generally. This is followed by a re-evaluation of the early years of Cuddesdon College. Since Owen Chadwick wrote his book, much new light has been shed on the ritualist controversies which marked the time of Pott and Liddon, and later Furse and Willis. These controversies, which were dominated by the arch-controversialist, Charles Portales Golightly, are brilliantly discussed by Andrew Atherstone in chapters two and four. In chapter three Alastair Redfern has drawn out the implications of Samuel Wilberforce's preaching and

¹ *The Founding of Cuddesdon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.

² *Cuddesdon College 1854-1929: A Record and Memorial*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930.

teaching for contemporary pastoral theology. This is followed by Michael Brierley's *tour de force* in chapter five which presents the first thoroughgoing history of Ripon Hall, as well as a portrait of Henry Major, its great principal and the leading figure in English liberal theology for many decades of the twentieth century. In chapter six I have tried to re-assess Cuddesdon College of the 1960s in the context of rapid social and theological change, but also to paint a portrait of Robert Runcie, whose personality shaped the college through that decade of change. Finally Robert Jeffrey brings the story up to date by charting the many ups and downs of the past twenty-five years or so since the merger.

All the contributors have tried to tell the story warts and all, making an effort to avoid the triumphalism that inevitably comes with institutional histories. And all of us are conscious that we are writing at a time when the finances of the Church of England are becoming increasingly limited and when a residential education is seen by many as something of a luxury. Ripon College Cuddesdon is meeting this challenge by reshaping itself for the new century and opening up its resources to the wider church and to other forms of theological training. However things might develop in the next few years it is our earnest hope that something of the ethos of Cuddesdon College, Ripon Hall and Ripon College Cuddesdon will survive – alongside a solid and rigorous academic education a good priest needs the space to learn how to pray and to be able to live together with all sorts and conditions of people. Something of those qualities were displayed in Michael Ramsey, whose 1958 College Festival Sermon is reproduced in Appendix One.

I would like to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to John Davies, the College Assistant Archivist, who has helped all the contributors by keeping the archives in such good order and by sharing his infectious enthusiasm for the past. The College has benefited much during his time as librarian and archivist. Thanks are also due to Owen Chadwick, a great friend of the College during his distinguished academic career. He has graciously allowed us to use his earlier research and to cite from his letters. I hope that the re-publication of his memorable sermon preached at the Cuddesdon Festival in 1966 (Appendix Two) will serve as a fitting tribute. Finally, it seems fitting to dedicate this book to all the students and staff of Cuddesdon College, Ripon Hall and Ripon College Cuddesdon and to give thanks for the enormous contribution they have made to God's church.

Mark D. Chapman
Cuddesdon
Michaelmas, 2003

Abbreviations

ABM	Advisory Board of Ministry
ACCM	Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CACTM	Central Advisory Council on Training for the Ministry
CCA	Cuddesdon College Archives, Ripon College Cuddesdon
ECU	English Church Union
KCL	Keble College Library, Oxford
LHP	Liddon House Papers
LP	Liddon Papers
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
MCU	Modern Churchmen's Union (now Modern Churchpeople's Union)
PHL	Pusey House Library
RCC	Ripon College Cuddesdon Archives
RHA	Ripon Hall Archives, Ripon College Cuddesdon
SSC	Society of the Holy Cross

Foreword

At least once a decade, the pattern of ministerial education in the Church of England becomes a matter of fierce debate and widespread anxiety. Both financial constraints and shifts in the understanding and expectation of ordained ministry have repeatedly unsettled the process of preparing people for ordination and other recognised ministries – with a good deal of cost in terms of personal unsettlement for teachers and students as well.

Such a period of unsettlement is upon us once again. And perhaps the greatest dangers in this context are short-term visions of both the past and the future. We don't remember quite why ministerial education has developed as it has, we ignore the often very elusive element in the process that is provided by the ethos and history of institutions. And we are in a hurry to sort out clearly defined new patterns that will accord with current thinking (fashion, if you want to be a bit sceptical).

In the discussions now going forward about restructuring ministerial education, a book like the present volume has a huge contribution to make, not just to the intellectual and institutional history of the Church of England but to that Church's self-understanding. What we have here is the record of two dramatically different enterprises in theological education which finally came together to find some sort of common vision. The story tells us that it is not a new thing to reshape ministerial training by provoking deeper conversation and negotiation between diverse traditions; but it also serves as a salutary reminder of the dangers of supposing too quickly that we know exactly what authentic Anglicanism looks like. Some of this record is painful reading because it tells of people under pressure to rethink some very profound convictions about Anglicanism – pressure as great for 'liberals' as for Tractarians.

But pervading the whole is one common assumption, boldly held and argued. Ministerial education is the training of theologians, not technicians; of men and women who are committed to being immersed daily in the common life of praying, thinking and imagining that is the reality of the Body of Christ and who are therefore daily ready to confront clichés and conventions in the name of God's revelation, God's self-gift. For this, both an intensive common life within the institution and a strong discipline of intellectual maturation are essential.

These things are not irrelevant luxuries. Whatever emerges from our current review of possibilities, the twin disciplines of common prayer and intellectual labour at the highest possible level are matters we cannot afford to sideline. As we read this excellent memoir of a history both brave and complex, we can be grateful that the Church of England has been so wonderfully served; and we can strengthen our resolve to make sure that such service is still available to the Church of the future.

The Most Revd Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury



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Chapter 1

Living the Truth: Cuddesdon in the History of Theological Education

Mark D. Chapman

The Rise of Theological Education in the Nineteenth Century

There was always something inherently vague about theological education as it developed in the Church of England in the nineteenth century, at least when it is compared with models on offer elsewhere. Where German and American theological curricula were highly structured and often resembled other forms of “professional” education, the character of Anglican theological education was more usually described in terms of the assimilation of an ethos, the ownership of a tradition and the development of a way of life or a pattern of being, rather than being primarily focused on the education of the “clerical practitioner”.¹ Furthermore, Anglican theological education has traditionally been rooted in the praying life of a religious community rather than in the purely intellectual atmosphere of the university. Indeed, as this opening section shows, it was the perceived failure of the university as a religious community that led to the development of theological colleges in the Church of England in the first place. What will be shown is that Anglican theological education provides a good

¹ On the history of theological education in the nineteenth century, see F. W. B. Bullock, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England, 1800-1874*, London: Home Words, 1955; *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England, 1875-1974*, London: Home Words, 1976; Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, pp. 116-76; D. A. Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Education: The Redbrick Challenge*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; K. Sterling, “The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1830-1914”, Ph.D. diss. Leicester University, 1982.

example of what Edward Farley called “theologia”,² that is, a conception of theology rooted in the practice of the church. This chapter discusses this model of education as it has developed in the Church of England, particularly at Cuddesdon, its counterparts in the early church and in the present day, as well as addressing some of its inherent problems. It concludes with a vision of a possible direction for the future.

Things developed very differently elsewhere. In Prussia, for instance, the rise of the modern university and the reform of the theological curriculum under the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the first professor of theology at the newly-founded University of Berlin, was to focus on the historical and philosophical knowledge and skills base required for the practice of ministry. In his short classic, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* of 1811,³ he justified theology in terms of the practical tasks of ministry. “Theology,” he claimed, “is a positive science [which itself is] a compass of scientific elements which do not cohere as though they formed a necessary part of scientific organisation as a result of the idea of science, but rather to the degree that they are required for the solution of a practical task.”⁴ Similarly, theology was “the compass of academic knowledge and skills, which unless possessed and used, there could be no leadership of the church or a church government”.⁵ Theology was no longer the science of God, on the medieval model, but instead was the theory behind a practical task. Indeed, without the practical ministerial orientation of theology “the same items of knowledge cease to be theological and each become part of a different science”.⁶

For Schleiermacher, then, the study of theology in the university was primarily the acquisition of historical knowledge and a set of practical methods, analogous to the learning of medical or legal theory, for the clerical practitioner, and is justified in terms of the functional requirements of an indispensable activity of the modern state – the need for the “cure of souls”.⁷ The minister, like the lawyer or the doctor, learns a particular tradition, works out its “historical” essence (using ordinary historical tools), and then passes this on, using the techniques of practical theology. Unlike the alternative model of theological education, which was developed in most Anglican theological colleges in the later nineteenth century as will be shown

² Edward Farley, *Theologia. The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

³ *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, tr. Terence Tice, Richmond: John Knox, 1966.

⁴ *Ibid.*, §1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, §5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, §6.

⁷ On this see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976, esp. p. 249.

below, Schleiermacher's is an extreme example of what might be called the clericalisation of theology whereby a specially trained leadership is equipped with a distinctive professional knowledge and a set of skills to perform a particular function in the church and state at large: theology is defined in terms of ministerial practice and thereby becomes a "technical rationality" rather than a spiritual discipline. This becomes clearest in Schleiermacher's famous description of the ideal clergyman:

Imagine the concern for religion and the scientific spirit united, for the sake of theory and practice, in the highest degree and in the most perfect balance, and you have the idea of a "prince of the church".⁸

In many ways things could not have been more different in England. There was no undergraduate study of theology as a distinct and separate discipline: as one writer comments, compared with Germany, "the Church of England was uniquely uninterested in theological training for its ministers".⁹ Whereas in the protestant churches in Germany from the Reformation onwards a degree in theology had been a general requirement for ordination, in England all that was needed was a simple arts degree. At the same time, however, at least in Oxford, a modicum of theological study, together with subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, was a requirement for all degrees, making the university a confessional establishment. At the turn of the nineteenth century, for instance, knowledge had to be shown in the Gospels in Greek, the Thirty-Nine Articles, as well as Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. On this model of theological study, the system of thought on which it was based was fixed and final, and did not allow for even a limited degree of critical study. Critics like Sydney Smith might have questioned such a limited understanding of theology, but other influential figures were prepared to defend it. Thus Edward Copleston, Provost of Oriel College, Oxford, and afterwards Dean of St Paul's and Bishop of Llandaff, could write:

There is one province of education indeed in which we are slow in believing that any discoveries can be made. The scheme of revelation we think is closed, and we expect no new light on earth to break in upon us ... We hold it our especial duty ... to keep strict watch around the sacred citadel, to deliver out in due measure

⁸ *Brief Outline*, §9.

⁹ L. W. B. Brockliss, "The European University, 1789-1850" in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, vol. vi: *The Nineteenth Century: Part One*, pp. 77-133, here p. 81.

and season the stores it contains, to make our countrymen look to it as a tower of strength, and to defend it against open and secret enemies.¹⁰

On the one hand, theology was a closed system which did not allow for critical thought, and, on the other hand, it was a requirement for all students, whatever they might be studying. Not surprisingly, given its compulsory status and limited content, it was not always taken seriously (just like obligatory chapel).

While there were many efforts to improve the status of theology in the 1830s and 1840s, which led to the foundation of several new professorships, the compulsory element of theology in all Oxford degrees seemed increasingly anachronistic, even if it was not finally abolished until 1931.¹¹ Following the Royal Commission which reported in 1854 and which led to the Oxford University Act of the same year, there were huge changes in the ecclesiastical presumptions of Oxford and a sharp decline in the numbers of graduates entering ministry. The Act itself, while not completely removing all religious tests, abolished subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles on matriculation and graduation. In the Archbishop of Canterbury's report on *The Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders* (which eventually led after the First World War to the introduction of the General Ordination Examination and the requirement for all ordinands to spend a period in a theological college) Dean Church was cited as evidence of the need for a non-university theological education:

It is necessary to remember that the University, as the Commission left it, is virtually a secular institution. The Divinity Professorships are still held by Priests, but the University is not concerned as such, either with maintaining, or developing, or arousing a desire for Holy Orders.¹²

Although Newman, Keble and Pusey had fought to ensure that Oxford University remained – and here it resembled their model of the apostolic church – a religious institution subject to its own form of authority and not to an apostate parliament, the forces of change were inexorable.¹³ As late as 1853 in his response to the Royal Commission on Oxford, Dr Pusey claimed that theology was something quite

¹⁰ Cited in M. G. Brock, "The Oxford of Peel and Gladstone, 1800-33" in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, vi, pp. 7-71, here p. 11.

¹¹ M. C. Curthoys, "The Examination System" in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, vii, pp. 339-74, esp. pp. 357-8.

¹² *The Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders: Report of the Committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 1908, p. 16n.

¹³ The decline of the "Anglican" University is described by Peter Nockles in "'Lost causes and ... impossible loyalties': the Oxford Movement and the University" in Brock and Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, vi, pp. 195-267.

distinct from other subjects and simply too sacred to be studied academically. He insisted that it was wrong to study the “history of doctrine”, because it had no real history, “the faith having been, once for all, made known to the inspired Apostles, and by them inserted in Holy Scripture, and committed to the Church”.¹⁴ As the century progressed, however, theology became simply one subject alongside the others, rather than a fundamental aspect of all higher education: the Oxford Honour School of Theology was finally established in 1870. By this time even Pusey had changed his mind, supporting the move in the hope that it might act as a bulwark against a more critical theological method.

The growth of Anglican theological education was in many ways a form of resistance to this gradual secularisation of the universities. It provides an alternative response to the German model which sought instead to accommodate theology to the modern university by redefining its character as a practical and historical discipline.¹⁵ If theology as the science of sacred knowledge and as the presupposition for all other knowledge could no longer find a home in the university, then it had to look elsewhere. By deliberately creating an atmosphere of holiness and withdrawal – virtues which appeared to be moribund in the secular universities – the first theological colleges, pre-eminent among them Cuddesdon, were to assist their students in the complex process of the discernment of God’s will through the life of prayer and discipline. Under the influence of the Oxford Movement, high spiritual ideals and independence from the world were consciously adopted as a witness against the decline of the university as a religious institution. While this new form of theological education might be a symptom of the increasing professionalisation of the clergy, which has been noted by many commentators, it should also be noted that the area of professional specialisation was in what might be called “affairs of the chancel”, and it comes as little surprise that it was accompanied by widespread architectural and liturgical reform. Where the secular role was declining, the religious became increasingly important.¹⁶

Henry Parry Liddon, Samuel Wilberforce’s choice as first vice-principal of Cuddesdon Theological College (founded in 1854), and later to be Pusey’s

¹⁴ E. B. Pusey, *Report and Evidence*, 1853, pp. 102-6. See also Peter Hinchliff, “Religious Issues: 1870-1914” in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, vol. vii: *The Nineteenth Century: Part Two*, pp. 97-114, esp. p. 97.

¹⁵ See esp. W. R. Ward, “From the Tractarians to the University Commission, 1845-1854” in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, *The History of the University of Oxford*, vi, pp. 306-38; and W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, London, 1965, chs 5-7.

¹⁶ On this see Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession*, London: SPCK, 1980; Rosemary O’Day, “The Clerical Renaissance” in Gerald Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, vol. i: *Traditions*, 1988, pp. 184-212; Brian Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, Hamden Connecticut: Anchor Books, 1976.

biographer, offers a shining example of a second generation Tractarian instilled with the sense of seriousness, and with a high vision of a form of theological education quite distinct from its secular counterparts.¹⁷ The proper study of theology required holiness of life, and simply could not be properly undertaken in what he later described as a “secularized university”.¹⁸ Even Cuddesdon’s location proclaimed something of these lofty spiritual ideals: where some dioceses had sought to establish theological colleges in the cathedral close in conscious imitation of a medieval ideal,¹⁹ it seemed to Wilberforce far better to build a college in a (relatively) remote country village location. This isolation would serve to instil a sense of spiritual discipline among the graduates of Oxford and Cambridge who might have sullied their minds by dabbling in methods imported from Germany. Clergy were to be educated not among the temptations of the modern city, but in a quiet village dominated by the church – just as it had been in the middle ages, when much of the village was part of the estates of Abingdon Abbey.²⁰

In a sermon preached at the Cuddesdon College Festival in 1868, Liddon summarised what he understood to be the purpose of this new form of theological education:

¹⁷ Liddon’s part in the shaping of Cuddesdon is described in detail by Owen Chadwick in *The Founding of Cuddesdon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954. See also below, chapter two.

¹⁸ “The Moral Groundwork of Clerical Training” in *Clerical Life and Work in Clerical Life and Work. A Collection of Sermons*, London: Longmans, 1894, pp. 73-92, here p. 84.

¹⁹ Chichester was founded in 1839 and Wells in 1840. See R. S. T. Haslehurst, “A Short History of Chichester Theological College” in *Cicestrian* 10 (Trinity 1939), pp. 82-100; and E. L. Elwes, *The History of Wells Theological College*, London, 1923; and W. M. Jacob, “The Diffusion of Tractarianism: Wells Theological College, 1840-49” in *Southern History* 5 (1983), pp. 189-209. While it is true in part that theological colleges represented an aspect of the “diocesan revival” of the nineteenth century, it is also crucial to see them as reactions to the secularisation of the universities. See Arthur Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c. 1800-1870*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, pp. 151-6.

²⁰ The manor had belonged to Abingdon Abbey since before the Norman Conquest. The rectory of Cuddesdon had been appropriated by the Abbey in the thirteenth century. After the Reformation the manor passed into secular hands but the rectory, the advowson to the vicarage, and some glebeland were annexed to the new see of Oxford in 1589. In 1632 John Bancroft, Bishop of Oxford, nominated himself as vicar and built his house in Cuddesdon. The bishops lived in the village until the 1970s. From 1636 the vicarage was also appropriated to the see. This meant that the bishops held the rectory and were also “vicars” of Cuddesdon until 1852, when the post of vicar was separated from the see, with Alfred Pott becoming first incumbent. He became the first principal of the college in 1854.

A theological college endeavours, so far as human agency can do this, to give the tongue of the learned, the power of spiritual instruction to the future ambassadors of Christ. ... It would fain teach them to listen, morning by morning, for the Divine Voice, explaining, deepening, fertilising within them the truth which is thus committed to their guardianship.²¹

On this model, theological education takes place within the broader context of a life committed to prayer and discipline. Here Liddon outlines the goal of theological education by drawing on what he calls the “God-taught wisdom” (*sophia theodidaktos*) tradition of the Greeks. Knowledge was not a matter of the assimilation of facts, but instead was the cultivation of a distinct form of wisdom required for the discernment of the voice of God. Indeed, for Liddon, it is this wisdom to which everything else is subordinated, and it is consequently the acquisition of such wisdom that characterises the goal of theological education. This is not limited to mere doctrine but embraces all aspects of life, thus shaping the very being of the clergyman as he “lives for God”.²² Liddon contrasts this form of education with that offered in the universities, institutions which, he felt, were already ceasing to “yield any public homage or honour to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”.²³ If the universities could no longer be entrusted with the cultivation of the traditional disciplines of knowing God, then the Church would have to develop its own system of education.

In another sermon preached at the College Festival five years later, Liddon further developed his understanding of wisdom as the basis of theological education. The primary task of the theological college, he maintained, was to ensure that theology was undertaken in the context of the Church and under the discipline of the “fear of the Lord”. Indeed, he went on:

The absence of [the] fear of the Lord, which is wisdom in the leading Bible sense of the term, is fatal to any living appreciation, if not to any appreciation whatever, of the doctrines of Redemption and Grace. ... Dogmatic wisdom has its root and beginning in the culture of those moral and spiritual sensibilities which Scripture calls the “fear of the Lord”.²⁴

On Liddon’s account, spiritual and theological wisdom required a basis in “conduct, in life, in conscience” which in turn implied both a “system” and an “atmosphere”. Against the reduction of theology to simply another form of

²¹ “The Work and Prospects of Theological Colleges” in *Clerical Life and Work*, pp. 46-72, here pp. 49-50.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁴ “Moral Groundwork”, pp. 82-3.

knowledge, it was impossible “in the case of theology to ignore morals, conduct, life, without the greatest risk”.²⁵ This required living by a “rule of love”, which would furnish the future clergy with an ideal pattern for living. Consequently any academic “system” required “a moral and religious atmosphere”.²⁶ This educational model was not easy to express but provided the means by which the sincerest form of friendship might be rooted in “consciously common convictions”.²⁷



Figure 1.1. Cuddesdon College Reading Room in about 1860

For Liddon, then, education in a theological college was first and foremost education in a disposition of the heart. This meant that its students were to be “men who know something of their own hearts ere they preach to others”.²⁸ In turn, this implied that the context of theological speculation was every bit as important as the speculation itself as part of the cultivation of theological wisdom. It was for this reason that the communal life and spirit were so important in forming the theological disposition. On Liddon’s account, a theological college was a community entrusted by the Church to develop theological wisdom in “the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

ambassadors of Christ”, that is, in those who were to be ordained to act in its name, to preach to it and to exhort and admonish it. For Liddon, theological education was far removed from the mere acquisition of a body of academic knowledge and a number of pastoral skills which were later to be put into practice. It was instead rooted in the quest for the knowledge of God.

The Theological Background

Given the educational background of the founders of Cuddesdon and their Tractarian forebears, it is hardly surprising that there was a strong Patristic and more general classical element in their understanding of theology.²⁹ The picture of a fixed truth which matured into its final doctrinal expression in the fourth and fifth century, combined with a modest study of the great Anglican theologians, Hooker and Pearson,³⁰ dominated the curriculum in distinction to the critical historical study undertaken on Schleiermacher’s model. Indeed the vision of theological education, as centred on the acquisition of a shared corporate mode of existence or form of life, is something akin to the ancient Greek model of *paideia*,³¹ that is, education in a continuing tradition borne by the society, in this case, the ecclesial society. Education was thus the process of being fitted for the life one led in society, which in the case of Athens involved the acquisition of the Athenian civic virtues: for the Christian it was by analogy the process of acquiring the virtues for life in the Christian society. Theological education on such a model was not something undertaken simply to acquire skills for the practice of a particular set of ministerial tasks but was the shared pursuit of all Christians who sought to journey through the Christian life.

²⁹ On the revival of Patristics by the Tractarians in the 1830s, see Peter Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, esp. pp. 110-13. More generally on Greek thought in the nineteenth century, see David Newsome, *Two Classes of Men: Platonism and English Romantic Thought*, London: John Murray, 1974. See also Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981; Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980. Newsome (like F. D. Maurice) points to the importance of Aristotelianism of the Oxford Movement over and against the Platonism of Cambridge (pp. 62-72).

³⁰ Chadwick, *Founding of Cuddesdon*, pp. 30-2.

³¹ On *Paideia* see the magisterial work by Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1939. For its assimilation into early Christianity see Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961. On *Paideia* and the social and tacit character involved in the assimilation of tradition, see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, pp. 73-95.

Several of the Greek Fathers pioneered similar models of Christian education:³² the education of people into their faith was an aspect of Christian life, as central as the discipline of prayer and the practice of Christian ethics. The teachings of the church (or “doctrines”) were not usually formulated along systematic lines, but were taught in sermons or expositions of scripture, as part of the very process of Christian living. For some, the goal of education was to get to know the Christian tradition and through this to encounter the divine teacher: theological education, as it was for Liddon many centuries later, was about listening out for the divine teacher. The interaction between educating the mind and the spiritual journey is well put by Gregory of Nazianzus:

God is light: the highest, the unapproachable, the ineffable, that can neither be conceived in the mind nor uttered in speech, that gives light to every reasoning creature. He is in the world of thought what the sun is in the world of sense; in proportion as we are cleansed, he presents himself to our minds; in proportion as he is presented to our mind he is loved; and again in proportion as we love him, he is conceived; himself contemplating and comprehending himself, and pouring himself out upon what is external to him. I mean that light that is contemplated in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, whose wealth is their unity of nature and the single outburst of their brightness.³³

Gregory thus suggests that the true theologian has to submit to the prayerful discipline of the contemplation of God; God in turn accommodates himself to the appropriate level of the spiritual ascent of the disciple. Theology, on this model, is no second-order reflection on Christian experience (as it was for Schleiermacher), but is an integral part of the religious life: it is a way of living and thinking in the presence of God which happens as a necessary corollary to prayer and worship. The teacher is God and the process of education is spiritual growth towards union with that God. Frances Young writes:

The earliest Christians were regarded as atheists because they did not practise recognisable religious rites. Rather they taught a way of life on the basis of a textbook received from the divine *Paidagogus*. That the earliest church was a learning community is borne out by subsequent development. True, more usual religious features crept in as analogies were drawn between Christian activities

³² Frances Young, “*Paideia* and the Myth of Static Dogma” in Sarah Coakley and David Pailin (eds.), *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1993, esp. pp. 280-2.

³³ *Orat.* 40.5. Cited in Young, “*Paideia* and the Myth of Static Dogma”, p. 280.